

Commission for Women

March 2005

Newsletter of the Montgomery County Commission for Women

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Commission Receives 2004 NACo Achievement Award

By Tracy Stuger

Every year, the National Association of Counties (NACo) recognizes innovative county government programs with Achievement Awards. This year, Montgomery County received 17 awards for outstanding programs. Of the nine Montgomery County departments that received awards, the Commission for Women was honored for its Brave New World seminar series which addressed the opportunities and challenges facing immigrant women in Montgomery County. Not only did this project win an Achievement Award, but it was singled out for special recognition in the January 17 issue of *County News*, NACo's national newspaper. The Commission for Women's Immigrant Women in (IWin) Montgomery committee organized a series of four seminars which offered the experience, insights and recommendations of experts. The series were conducted in June, September, October and November of 2003.

The first seminar provided an overview of the many challenges facing immigrant women. It featured an expert panel of advocates, community leaders and service providers discussing their insights and recommendations on a range of social, cultural and economic issues impacting immigrant women and their families. The remaining three seminars focused on education; health, safety and domestic violence; and employment and economic issues.

The series provided new and very valuable information to benefit both the residents and service providers of Montgomery County. The events also provided a venue for the development of connections and networks between service providers, community advocates, and organizational leaders, to begin filling gaps in information and services. An important outcome of this program was the enhancement of the level of citizen understanding of government and non-profit programs serving, or that could better serve, the population of immigrant women.

The Montgomery County Commission for Women is honored to have been granted one of the 2004 NACo Achievement Awards. The Commission has previously received seven other NACo Awards including the 2003 Achievement Award for its on-line *Montgomery County Women's History Archive* project and the 2000 Achievement Awards for the *Girls and Technology Initiative* and the *Work Life Initiative*.

The National Association of Counties (NACo) works to improve public understanding of counties, serves as a national advocate for counties and provides them with resources to help them find innovative methods to meet the various challenges that they face. In 1970, NACo established the annual Achievement Award Program, a non-competitive awards program that recognizes counties for improving the management of and services provided by county government.

March 2005



President's Message

By Patricia Cornish

March is Women's History month! Do you know how it began?

As recently as the 1970's, women's history was virtually

an unknown topic in the K-12 curriculum or in general public consciousness. To address this situation, the Education Task Force of the Sonoma County (California) Commission on the Status of Women initiated a "Women's History Week" celebration for 1978. They chose the week of March 8 to make International Women's Day the focal point of the observance. The activities that were held met with enthusiastic response, and within a few years dozens of schools planned special programs for Women's History Week, over one-hundred community women participated in the Community Resource Women Project, an annual "Real Woman" Essay Contest drew hundreds of entries, and they were staging an annual parade and program in downtown Santa Rosa, California.

In 1979, a member of the Commission on the Status of Women was invited to participate in Women's History Institutes at Sarah Lawrence College, attended by the national leaders of organizations for women and girls. When they learned about the county-wide Women's History Week celebration, they decided to initiate similar celebrations within their own organizations and school districts. They also agreed to support efforts to secure a Congressional Resolution declaring a "National Women's History Week. In 1981, Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Rep. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) co-sponsored the first Joint Congressional Resolution.

As word spread rapidly across the nation, state departments of education encouraged celebrations of National Women's History Week as an effective means to achieving equity goals within classrooms. Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, Oregon, Alaska, and other states developed and distributed curriculum materials in all of their public schools.

Organizations sponsored essay contests and other special programs in their local areas. Within a few years, thousands of schools and communities were celebrating National Women's History Week, supported and encouraged by resolutions from governors, city councils, school boards, and the U.S. Congress.

In 1987, the National Women's History Project petitioned Congress to expand the national celebration to the entire month of March. Since then, the National Women's History Month Resolution has been approved with bipartisan support in both the House and Senate. Each year, programs and activities in schools, workplaces, and communities have become more extensive as information and program ideas have been developed and shared.

*"We have much
to celebrate
during Women's
History Month."*

In 2005, the Women's History Month theme is "Women Change America," which celebrates ways in which the spirit, courage, and contributions of American women have added to the vitality, richness, and diversity of American life.

I invite you to look through the pages of this newsletter where you will see the incredible work of the MCCFW, providing over 32 years of advocacy, progress and service to our community, to our state and to the nation. Please also visit the Commission's on-line Montgomery County Women's History Archive at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cfw celebrating the lives of 30 women of historical significance to the county. During this month the Commission will also have a beautiful Women's History Month display featured at the Rockville Library.

We have much to celebrate during Women's History Month!

Legislators Override Veto of Pay Equity Commission Bill

By Tracy Stuger

On January 11, 2005, at a special session of the Maryland General Assembly, the future of female wage earners in Maryland was brightened by a legislative veto override of SB 250. Although SB 250 passed overwhelmingly by both the House and Senate during the last session of the General Assembly, Governor Ehrlich vetoed the bill which establishes a commission to study gender differences in wages throughout the state. The veto override effort passed the Senate by a vote of 33 to 14 (29 votes were needed) and passed the House by 92 to 43 (85 votes were needed).

Despite increases in women's wages and improvements in women's economic status over the past several decades, wage discrimination still persists. Earnings for women consistently fall behind men across all occupations and education levels. This discrepancy has a lifelong cumulative effect that reduces the economic well-being of millions of women, people of color and their families.

As outlined in S.B. 250, an Equal Pay Commission will now be established to study the continuing wage gap in Maryland. By focusing specifically on Maryland, the Commission would enable the state to solve the problems specific to Maryland rather than solely relying on national data.

The veto override of the Pay Equity Commission bill is a huge victory for the women this state and for their families. Special thanks is owed to Senator Sharon Grosfeld, Montgomery County Executive

Douglas Duncan, the state legislators who voted to override the veto and to the many women and men who contacted their legislators, for the tremendous effort undertaken to ensure that the state of Maryland is committed to paycheck fairness for all its workers.

Wage Gap Widens

By Patricia Cornish

The gap between median earnings of full-time, year-round workers widened last year, with women earnings 76% of men's, down from 77% in 2002. Women's median earnings were \$30,724, compared to \$40,668 for men. The last time the female-to-male earnings ratio declined was 1998-99.

Median earnings for women of color continue to be lower, in general, than earnings for men as a whole. In 2003, the earnings for African American women were \$26,989, 66% of men's earnings (down from 68% in 2002); Latinas at \$22,363, 55% of men's earnings (down from 56% in 2002); and Asian American women at \$32,446, 80% of men's earnings (wage gap remained the same).

Unequal pay takes a significant toll on working women and their families, reports the Institute for Women's Policy Research. **"Still a Man's Labor Market: The Long-Term Earnings Gap"** finds women's total earnings over their prime working years average only 38 percent of what prime-age men earn due to a combination of lower pay, more part-time work and time out of the workforce to care for children. The typical prime-age working woman earned \$273,592 between 1983 and 1998 while the typical working man earned \$722,693.

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Equal Pay Day - April 19, 2005

By Tracy Stuger

Equal Pay Day will be held this year on April 19, 2005. This national observance, sponsored each year by the National Committee on Pay Equity, symbolizes the day into the new year that an American woman must work to equal the wages paid to a man in the previous year. Red is worn on this day as a symbol of how far women and minorities are “in the red” with their pay.

Although the Equal Pay Act of 1963 prohibits unequal pay for equal or “substantially equal” work performed by men and women, women continue to earn substantially less than their male counterparts. In addition, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits wage discrimination on the basis of sex. However, statistics prove that these laws are very difficult to enforce.

Pay equity enhances women’s economic status, and serves as an equalizer and neutralizer in the workforce. By ending gender-based discriminatory pay practices, pay equity will contribute to fairer and more productive work environment.

Over 500 groups throughout the nation will participate in Equal Pay Day activities in their hometowns. Some of the scheduled activities include press conferences, rallies, forums, lobbying efforts and “new year’s day” celebrations.

For more information on Equal Pay Day, and what you or your organization can do to help, contact the National Committee on Pay Equity by phone at 202-223-8360 Ext. 8, by email at fairpay@pay-equity.org, or by visiting <http://www.pay-equity.org/>.

Cokie Roberts Keynotes Women’s Legislative Briefing 2005

By Tracy Stuger

On Sunday, January 30, 2005, the Commission for Women celebrated its 25th year as host of the Women’s Legislative Briefing. The event was held at the National 4-H Conference Center in Chevy Chase, Maryland and was sponsored in collaboration with almost 80 prominent women’s and community organizations throughout the state. The purpose of the briefing is to provide information on legislative issues that are of concern to women and families, and that will be introduced in the Maryland General Assembly and U.S. Congress. For more than two decades, the briefing has served as a forum for legislators, community advocates, experts and interested citizens. Among the many legislative initiatives discussed by panelists at this year’s event were pay equity, sexual assault, and effective lobbying.

Cokie Roberts, Senior News Analyst and Political Commentator for National Public Radio and ABC-News respectively delivered an inspiring keynote address in which she discussed her lifelong role as an advocate for change. After her remarks, Ms. Roberts also stayed at the event to sign copies of her recently published nationally-acclaimed book, “Founding Mothers: The Women Who Raised Our Nation.”

Commissioner Shelia Parker, Chair of the 2005 Women’s Legislative Briefing was Mistress of Ceremonies during the opening ceremonies. The opening also included greetings from Montgomery County Executive Douglas Duncan, United States Congressman Chris Van Hollen, and Maryland State Delegate Jean Cryor.

The opening ceremonies were followed by a series of workshops focused on Keeping Women Safe and Healthy, Protecting Our Sisters - Issues Confronting Immigrant Women, Making “Work & Women” Work, Understanding the Legislative and Budget Process, Keeping Our Families Strong and Speaking for Maryland Women - The New Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women (M-LAW).

In each workshop, a panel of experts including legislators and community leaders led the audience in an informed discussion about policy affecting women. Most workshops were held twice to allow audience members the opportunity to attend more than one session.

The Keeping Women Safe and Healthy Workshop addressed legislative initiatives regarding domestic violence, sexual assault and reproductive health legislation. Panelists included Lisae Jordan, Director, Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault Legal Institute, Cynthia Golomb, Legislative Counsel, Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence and Susan Howley, Director of Policy and Victim Services, National Center for Victims of Crime. Jodi Finkelstein, Executive Director of the Domestic Violence Center of Howard County, Inc. served as the moderator for this session.

The workshop on Protecting Our Sisters - Issues Confronting Immigrant Women featured Dr. Leslie Wolfe, President, Center for Women Policy Studies and Kim Propeack, Co-Director, Community Organizing and Action Department, CASA of Maryland, Inc. The panel discussed trafficking of women and children, domestic servitude, U.S. funding for reproductive health in other countries, and the challenges of immigrant domestic workers. The moderator for this panel was Yun Jung Yang, Chair of the Montgomery County Commission for Women's Immigrant Women in (IWin) Montgomery County Committee.

Moderated by Dorothy Fait, former Chair of the Montgomery County Commission for Women, the Keeping Our Families Strong Workshop included Senator Sharon Grosfeld, Delegate Kathleen Dumais and Susan Elgin, Esq., of the Women's Law Center of Maryland, Inc. The panel discussed upcoming legislation with regard to child support, divorce, child custody and other family law issues.

Panelists for the Making "Work & Women" Work workshop discussed issues regarding social security, paid leave and pay equity. Participants in this workshop included Jodi Grant, Director of Work and Family Programs & Public Policy, National Partnership for Women and Families and Holly Fechner, Chief Labor Counsel, Office of Senator Edward Kennedy. Patricia Cornish, President of the Montgomery County Commission for Women moderated each session.

The Understanding the Legislative and Budget Workshop gave audience members insight on the most effective methods in making one's voice heard by our lawmakers. Panelists included Delegate Jean Cryor and Delegate Verna Jones. This workshop was moderated by Judith Morenoff, President, League of Women Voters of Maryland.

The workshop on Speaking for Maryland Women - The new Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women (M-LAW) provided insight on M-LAW and its priorities for the upcoming legislative session. Michael Cohen, Executive Director of the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence moderated the panel which included Senator Sharon Grosfeld, L. Tracy Brown, Esq., Executive Director of the Women's Law Center of Maryland and Sharon Leatherman, Chair, Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women (M-LAW).

The Women's Legislative Briefing 2005 was cosponsored by 78 organizations including the Commissions for Women of Montgomery County, Allegany County, Baltimore County, Cecil County, Charles County, Frederick County, Harford County, Howard County, Prince George's County, Washington County, Worcester County, and the State of Maryland. The event was organized with the help and expertise of volunteers representing the commissions and organizations of these jurisdictions. Discovery Communications, Inc., Dynamac Corporation, DecorandYou.com, Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, Women's Bar Association of Montgomery County, MD, Michael Cohen, Marilyn R. Klompus & Robert D. Garland, Ruby Aridi and the Montgomery County Commission for Women provided financial support for the event.

2005 Summer Computer Camps for Middle School Girls

By Tracy Stuger

This summer, Montgomery College in partnership with the Montgomery County Commission for Women and the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) is again offering two camps, GURL Power Camp (Website Design for Girls) and Computer Programming for Girls. The camps will be held at the three campuses of Montgomery College: Takoma Park, Germantown, and Rockville. In previous years, the Commission has provided scholarships to ensure that girls from low income families and girls for whom English is a second language have an opportunity to attend the camps.

2005 Gurl Power Summer Computer Camps for Middle School Girls (grades 6-8)

Come join us for our FUN two-week camp session filled with creative and interesting projects *designed especially for middle school girls!* Create cool digital graphics and design your own website while using your creativity and sense of style. Our two week camp will include a field trip to see how technology is used in interesting and exciting ways, meet with invited guests to explore technology careers, and include time for sports, art, and other cool stuff. **Basic computer familiarity required! Two dates to chose from:**

Where: Germantown Campus
When: July 5 - July 15, 2005

Time: 9:00am to 3:30pm
Monday - Friday
Cost: \$360 tuition + \$50 fee = \$410
Out of state residents add \$225
Course: SCH 181

Where: Takoma Park Campus
When: August 1 - August 12, 2005

Time: 9:00am to 3:30pm
Monday - Friday
Cost: \$370 tuition + \$50 fee = \$420
Out of state residents add \$225
Course: SCH 182

2005 Computer Programming for Middle School Girls! (grades 7-9)

Find out what it takes to write a computer program through this summer camp designed to teach the fundamentals of programming in a fun environment with cool projects to try out your new programming skills. The camp will focus on Visual Basic programming language and present programming logic and problem solving, the basis of any computer programming language. ***Experience in Windows, on or above grade level math!***

Where: Rockville Campus
When: July 18 – July 29, 2005
Time: 9:00am to 3:30pm,
Monday - Friday
Cost: \$370 tuition + \$50 fee = \$420
Out of state residents add \$225
Course: SCH 180

For more information on Montgomery College's Summer Camp programs, call Heather at (301) 251-7917 or visit
www.montgomerycollege.edu/wdce

School Girls Raise Funds to Help Girls in Mali

By Wendy Lesko,
Coordinator of School Girls United

The Commission for Women recently co-sponsored a superbly successful event by School Girls Unite. This new global girls leadership program is headquartered right here in Montgomery County. Most of the members of this multicultural organization are 8th graders from Newport Mills Middle School, along with half a dozen young West African women who live and work in the area. This School Girls Unite USA chapter is partnering with its sister site in Mali that is comprised of 10th grade girls. Together this girl-led endeavor is determined to improve educational opportunities in one of the poorest countries in the world where 64% of females do not attend school.

On Super Bowl Sunday, 300 people of all ages and backgrounds filled the auditorium at the University of Maryland Shady Grove Conference Center for an inspiring two-hour program. One person in the audience commented about the 8th graders' presentation, "The skit brought tears to my eyes, seeing how much the girls have assimilated the challenges their sisters face in Mali and the rest of Africa." Ambassador Abdoulaye Diop of Mali emphasized the importance of girls' schooling in his speech: "When you educate a man, you educate one person but when you educate a woman, you educate a whole family, and even a whole community."

Other highlights of this February 6th Benefit included remarks by Laura Liswood, co-founder of the Council of Women World Leaders, who is determined to figure out what it will take to elect a woman president in the United States. The main feature was a dynamic one-woman performance by Kate Campbell Stevenson who portrayed Native American guide Sacagawea, Eleanor Roosevelt as well as contralto and civil rights advocate Marian Anderson.

Every penny of the \$5,540 raised by School Girls Unite will go directly to improve girls' education. It costs less than \$40 to send a girl to school for an entire year and already this young nonprofit organization has made it possible for 15 girls to attend school this year. The USA and Mali chapters will be researching the wisest ways to put this money to work that might include building a classroom, constructing separate latrines for girls, or training more women teachers.

People who would like to assist School Girls Unite can visit www.SchoolGirlsUnite.org and sign up to receive free e-updates about future activities. There are many ways to assist. You can talk with your family and friends who live all over the country about why educating girls is the best solution for a better world. People can help by encouraging everyone to write personal letters to their Members of Congress urging them to invest in girls in developing countries.

Let's all remember a favorite quote of School Girls Unite: "If you think you are too small to make difference, you've never been in bed with a mosquito!"

***"How important it is for us to recognize and
celebrate our heroes and she-roles!"
- Maya Angelou***

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Women's History Month Things to Do:

- ❖ During the month of March, please visit our **Women's History Showcase on display at the Rockville Public Library, 99 Maryland Avenue, Rockville, Maryland**
- ❖ Also, visit the **Women's History Quilt on display at the Commission for Women, 401 North Washington Street, Suite 100, Rockville, Maryland** and the **Women's History Archives** at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cfw

LIFETIME TELEVISION RECEPTION, Wednesday, March 16, 2005, Lifetime Television will honor the National Women's History Project and its 25th Anniversary of "Writing Women Back into History." 5:30 to 8:00 PM, Hay Adams Hotel, Washington, DC. Free and open to the public, but tickets are limited. If you are interested in attending, call the National Women's History Project 707-636-2888.

Other Events:

Kate Campbell Stevenson: ROLE MODELS FOR A NEW GENERATION, Tuesday, March 15, 2005, 6:00PM Networking, 7:00PM Dinner, 8:00PM Program, Regency Room, Doubletree Hotel, 1750 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD, Dinner & Program: \$33, Program Only: \$20; Students \$10, RSVP to Erin Rosenfeldt by March 10th, (H) 301-838-3066 or (W) 301-340-7788, x1202, (WE) rkvlerin@yahoo.com

6TH ANNUAL HEALTH EMPOWERMENT FORUM FOR WOMEN, Wednesday, April 20, 2005, 6:30 pm Networking, Exhibits and Refreshments, 7:00 pm Program, Jewish Community Center of Greater Washington, 6125 Montrose Road, Rockville, MD 20852, Free Parking and Admission (photo identification is required for admission), Contact Aileen Worrell at 301-367-8826